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VIII
"ABC'S ISSUES AND ANSWERS" (Excerpts)

September 9, 1962 (11)

GUEST: Paul H. Nitze, Assistant Secretary of State for
International Security Affairs

PANEL: Bob Clark and
John Scali, ABC Correspondents

QUESTION: . . . The Chinese Nationalist Government has just confirmed that one of its U-2 planes is missing over Communist China. Can you tell us when and why the United States turned over U-2's to the Nationalist Air Force?

MR. NITZE: The agencies of the United States government have made a very careful investigation of this point and I believe the State Department has just issued a statement in which they have said that the Lockheed Aircraft Company entered into direct negotiations with the Chinese Nationalists in 1960 for the sale of two U-2's to the Chinese Nationalists. An export license was issued to cover the export of these two U-2's.

QUESTION: Was the plane Chinese Nationalist or was it American?

MR. NITZE: It was a Chinese Nationalist plane. The United States does not fly planes over Communist China.

QUESTION: Isn't this new incident going to embarrass the United States pretty badly since we have made so much of the fact that we are not flying U-2's over the Soviet and Communist China ourselves?

MR. NITZE: Well, it is not a happy event.

QUESTION: . . . could you tell us . . . whether we were aware that the Chinese Nationalists were flying U-2's over Communist territory?

MR. NITZE: This I can't comment on.

QUESTION: Have we given U-2's to any allies other than Nationalist China?

MR. NITZE: I can't comment on that either. The State Department . . . must comment on an affair of this kind.

QUESTION: . . . Do you have any reason to believe, regardless of U-2, whether the Chinese have Soviet surface-to-air missiles that can go up sixty to seventy thousand feet, wherever the U-2 was flying?

MR. NITZE: Well, I presume they must have some surface to air missiles. *** I think the United States has grounds for being concerned about the military assistance which the Soviet Union is giving to Cuba. This has been going on for a long period of time. But in recent weeks we have received evidence that the Soviet Union has supplied Cuba with surface-to-air missiles. These are defensive missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, and also torpedo boats with missiles of a range of 15 miles, and I think we have grounds for concern about this, even though what they have supplied so far is purely defensive.

QUESTION: Do you mean concern about the possibility of a Communist offensive that would endanger the security of the United States?

MR. NITZE: No, I think the grounds for concern are first of all that this assistance the Soviets are giving Castro makes it more difficult for the Cuban people ever to restore their freedom, and secondly, this helps Castro consolidate his position in Cuba and thereby might increase the possibility that Cuba could be used as a base for Communist infiltration into the rest of the hemisphere.

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And obviously we have also got some concern, not very great, about Guantanamo, where we have very solid and legal rights, but I am quite sure that Mr. Castro would not contemplate attacking Guantanamo. The Navy has looked into this and can assure the defense of Guantanamo.

QUESTION: . . . Are we considering any kind of military action against Castro?

MR. NITZE: President Kennedy made it very clear that we are not contemplating an invasion of Cuba. He did, however, also state that we would not permit Communist aggression from Cuba to be applied against any country in this hemisphere and we would use whatever force was necessary in order to prevent that.

QUESTION: . . . you have made the point that the weapons shipments thus far are defensive in character. What would our reaction be if Castro were to install longer range Communist missiles on his territory, something like an MRBM, for example, which could reach American territory?

MR. NITZE: Well, this would be contrary to the policy that the Soviet Union has followed in the past with respect to its satellites. I would think that the Communists would consider very carefully before they made such a move, because this would have the most serious consequences if they were to do it.

QUESTION: . . . do you mean if we felt the Soviet arms buildup in Cuba was reaching the point where it was becoming dangerous to our security, that we might then consider a naval blockade of Soviet vessels?

MR. NITZE: We would consider the measures necessary for the security of ourselves and of the hemisphere.

QUESTION: Couldn't this be even more dangerous than an invasion of Cuba, if we start stopping the Soviet ships on the high seas? Aren't we then risking a big war?

MR. NITZE: As I said, I think it is unlikely that the Soviets would make this change in policy. If they were to make such a change in policy, this could have the most serious consequences.

QUESTION: ...part of the speculation about the reason for the Soviet weapons shipments has been that Castro is thinking of either eavesdropping on, or jamming American launches at Cape Canaveral. Do we have any reason to believe that he might want to do something like this?

MR. NITZE: No. Associated with the anti-aircraft missiles also that the Soviet have delivered to Cuba, there has been electronic and radar equipment, but there is no evidence of the type of thing of which he speaks.

QUESTION: President Kennedy and the Administration have made it clear that in handling the Castro problem they want to deal through the Organization of American States so as to get collective action if possible. If the other American representatives drag their feet now that there is evidence of this considerable shipment of weapons and technicians, would you favor going it alone if necessary?

MR. NITZE: I think there has been a considerable evolution of thought in Latin America in the last year or so with respect to Cuba. I think there is a far greater realization of the degree to which the Castro movement is in fact a tool of the Communist movement. I think there is a greater feeling of the threat to the hemisphere which the Castro regime presents and therefore I think it is more likely than it might have been in the past that there would be support in the OAS for measures which are necessary.

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QUESTION: Is the Cuban problem the reason the President has asked for authority to call up 150,000 Reserves?

MR. NITZE: No, not the Cuban problem by itself. The point here is that Congress is about to go out of session. Last year the Congress gave the President the authority to call up up to 250,000 men in the event he needed to. During the Berlin crisis some 160,000 I believe were called up. But during the period these reserves were in service, measures were taken to greatly increase the readiness of our regular combat forces. The number of regular combat divisions was increased from 11 to 16, or by 45 percent. Therefore we are in better shape now than we were last year. Therefore we are hopeful that it will not be necessary to call up the Reserves. In any event, it is not contemplated that any of the Reserves that were called up last year would be called up under this authority.

QUESTION: Would you say the Cuban situation rather than Berlin, for instance, is the chief reason why Mr. Kennedy asked for this authority?

MR. NITZE: I think it is quite possible that there will be an increase in pressure someplace in the world prior to next February, the end of this authority. It might be in Berlin, it might be in Southeast Asia, it might be in Cuba, it might be in a combination of all. But in any case it seemed wise to ask the Congress for the additional flexibility which this authority to call up 150,000 men gives us.

QUESTION: . . . I seem to recall that a few months ago the Pentagon or a Pentagon spokesman said we would seek to meet future crises without having to call up the Reserves, mainly because of what you pointed out, that the regular Army has now been increased and our conventional forces are that much stronger.

MR. NITZE: Well, this is our purpose, to reduce the necessity of having to call up Reserves by having stronger ready forces than these we have produced to the extent I have mentioned, and are continuing to increase the power of our combat ready forces. However, if a crisis were to arise and it were necessary to deploy some of these combat-ready forces then it might be wise to call some of the Reserves to fill the gap which had been left by those ready forces which were deployed. In other words, we would not want to use Reserves to meet the immediate issue, but it might be wise in the United States' interests to call up Reserves to fill that gap.

QUESTION: . . . Is there any Administration plan to act to do something about Castro if the danger continues on the present level?

MR. NITZE: At the moment, as I said, the assistance which the Soviets have given appears to be defensive in nature.

QUESTION: Do you mean to imply as long as that is the picture we don't plan any real action?

MR. NITZE: We don't contemplate action of the type I think you are suggesting.

QUESTION: . . . Do you think that Castro, with 30 shiploads or so of Soviet weapons and some 3500 technicians is in danger of dying on the vine at any time in the foreseeable future?

MR. NITZE: I would doubt whether Castro's true support amongst the Cuban people is as great as it was at one time. I think a regime of his type does become known to its own people. I should think that more and more his control over the Cuban people depends on the force of his arms, the arms he is getting

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from the Soviet Union. This kind of support can be fragile.

QUESTION: Is there an active opposition against him -- guerrillas in the mountains or elsewhere, organizing and hoping for the day when they can overthrow him?

MR. NITZE: There are some indications of that kind of thing, but it does not appear probable that it is strong enough to take any action in the near-term future.

QUESTION: Why do you think he has mobilized all these civilian militia? Do you think he has them parading up and down the beach looking for a major invasion?

MR. NITZE: I think he is scared of his own people.

QUESTION: Do you think we should be doing something . . . to encourage counter-revolution?

MR. NITZE: Certain types of action on our part could be counter productive. It could give him the argument with his own people that it is the U.S. and not himself that is the threat to them.

QUESTION: . . . there have been those who have said that if and when we ever took any action against Mr. Castro, that it is almost certain that the Soviets would retaliate against us by creating crises elsewhere, perhaps by squeezing us very hard in Berlin. Do you think that this is a serious possibility?

MR. NITZE: Well, it is true today various situations in the world are interrelated. One can't just look at Berlin as an isolated case, one can't just look at Cuba as an isolated case, or at Southeast Asia, or at any one of these other things. They are to some degree interrelated but it isn't necessary to go as far as I thought you were suggesting, that to do something in Cuba would necessarily mean that something would happen someplace else.

QUESTION: Do you see Cuba as possibly part of a grand strategy of the Soviet to force us eventually to give up some of our military bases in places like Iran, Turkey and Thailand?

MR. NITZE: I think basically what Mr. Khrushchev is trying to do is to make a totally invalid point. The point I think he is trying to make is that there is a similarity between the defense and the assistance we are giving to places that are threatened by Communist aggression, to the support that he is giving to Castro. Now what one really ought to look at is the purpose behind the two types of assistance. The assistance that we have been giving is in order to enable countries to maintain governments of their own choice. Would, except for our assistance, the government of Viet Nam still be there? Would the government of the Republic of Korea still be there? I doubt that they would be. But then if you look at our neighbors, none of those neighbors are in any way threatened by our exercising control or domination over them. All you have to do is to look at the history of the last 20 years and at the map to see the difference in basic purpose which has been demonstrated over the last 20 years, the things that the Communists are trying to do and what we are trying to do and therefore it is not at all correct to draw this analogy between the assistance we are giving to some country like India, Pakistan or Viet Nam to the assistance the Russians are giving to Cuba.

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QUESTION: Well, whether this is correct or not, don't you think there is a valid fear in the Russian mind of our military bases ringing the Soviet?

MR. NITZE: No, I think this really springs from what the Communists know to be their own policy. The Communists have made it perfectly clear that they consider that eventually there must come about the triumph of the Communist system worldwide. This is what their doctrine tells them and they consider themselves duty-bound to use all their resources including these supports, to bring about that worldwide triumph.

Now when they know that this is their policy, that this is what they are going to do, then they consider that anybody who will not cooperate in that policy is a threat to the peace. Therefore they use the term "peace" as meaning really a world dominated by Communism. They use the phrase "peaceful coexistence" as meaning those who will cooperate in bringing about that kind of a world. They use the word "war monger" as being someone who will stand firm in defense of a system of government of his own choice.

QUESTION: ...speaking of Soviet weapons, there are reports out of Germany to the effect that the Soviets have lined the air corridors leading to Berlin with anti-aircraft missiles. Are these reports true?

MR. NITZE: I think they are exaggerated, but it is true that they do have anti-aircraft missiles and they have had for some time, in the corridors through which Western planes fly, the air corridors into Berlin.

QUESTION: Has there been any increase of late?

MR. NITZE: I think there has been an increase. I think not as substantial as some of the reports have indicated.

QUESTION: Do you agree with the growing view that the Soviet is pushing Berlin toward a new crisis, that Khrushchev is finally ready to sign his long-delayed peace treaty with East Germany?

MR. NITZE: This is a very dangerous situation in Berlin. The Communist tactics have been those "bit by bit, piece by piece" narrowing the margin between what has existed in the past and the vital interests of the West in maintaining the freedom of Berlin. So that any further pressure by them can really impinge upon the vital interests of the West and therefore it is extremely dangerous if they go further.

Now a peace treaty in itself is not important. The Russians once before signed a peace treaty with the East German government, but this time, in view of all that has gone on in the last two years, it may be that Mr. Khrushchev would think that he couldn't just sign a peace treaty, but that that peace treaty would then have to be followed by action and what I say then is that any further encroachment would, I believe, impinge or run the risk of impinging upon the vital interests of the West and the West has taken the firmest commitments to maintain those vital interests.

QUESTION: You sound as if you regard the Berlin situation today as more critical than it was a year ago when the wall went up. Do you?

MR. NITZE: In a way, I do.

QUESTION: Do you think that the odds are that Mr. Khrushchev, after having threatened to sign the peace treaty for so long, is almost certain to sign one this fall, or this winter?

MR. NITZE: I wouldn't go that far.

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QUESTION: You have spoken of the Soviet plan or strategy of trying to whittle down our rights in West Berlin.

Do you think that by using armored cars, for example, to carry their guards to the Soviet memorial in the Western zone. . . that the Soviets are seeking to assert an occupation role which they have not had previously in the Western zone?

MR. NITZE: Well, I think it might be useful to go back to the history of this occupation regime. In 1945 the four-power allied commandatura was set up which was to occupy Berlin until a peace treaty, and each one of the nations, Russia, France, the U.S. and U.K., had control over one sector of Berlin, but pursuant to a policy which was to be decided by the four together. But in '48 the Russians withdrew from the four-power commandatura and since that time the Western commandants have had no authority whatsoever in the East sector of Berlin.

Now what the Russians are trying to do is to maintain Russian presence in West Berlin and to equate that with the Western access to West Berlin by the corridors and the air routes feeling that they would cut us off from any influence over the Eastern sector, and this is something that we do not propose to have equated.

QUESTION: If the Berlin situation is as critical as you picture it, wouldn't it be wise to delay the release of some of the Reserves called up last year, or, in fairness to them, immediately call into active service some of the new Reserves that the President now wants authority to call into service?

MR. NITZE: No. As I said earlier, last year when this crisis arose, it looked quite probable that it would be not a short-term crisis but a long-term period of tension and that therefore what we should do was both to increase our immediate strength by calling up the Reserves, but under that cover of an increase of immediate strength to build long-term strength which wouldn't face us with the necessity of calling up reserves and then releasing them. So to the extent that we can we would like to rely upon this increase in our combat-ready forces to handle these crises.

QUESTION: Part of the present crisis in West Berlin. . . stems from the fact that the Soviets are continuing to use their armored cars to carry their peaceful guards to this Soviet war memorial. Now that tensions have abated somewhat. . . why don't we tell them "Get back into the busses that you formerly used"?

MR. NITZE: I should think it would be appropriate if the Soviet Union did use busses rather than armored cars.

QUESTION: Are we going to suggest that they do so?

MR. NITZE: I wouldn't like to predict exactly what we are going to do.

QUESTION: We have talked for many months about taking the initiative in Berlin and yet we still seem to be reacting chiefly to moves that the Soviet makes. Can you think of any positive move we could take in Berlin to get the Berlin problem off dead center?

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In the Berlin situation there it is the Soviet Union that is claiming that Berlin is a source of tension and of danger to the world and they are the ones who are creating the incidents in order to justify their claim. And we have been trying to demonstrate what I believe to be the truth and that is that Berlin is not necessarily a source of tension. It has been possible over the years to live with this situation in Berlin and therefore we do not want to take the initiative to increase tension. We want to do the reverse, and that is to demonstrate that the Berlin situation could be a situation with viability except for what the Soviets are doing. And this I think we are demonstrating in Berlin and therefore the intelligent course for us to do is exactly what we are doing and not to take initiatives for initiatives' sake.

QUESTION: . . . You think that time is on our side in the Berlin crisis?

MR. NITZE: That is a somewhat different question, but basically I do think that.

QUESTION: ...the Administration has made the point I think that, partly as a result of calling up more troops in the regular Army, and mobilizing Reserves, that we have convinced Mr. Khrushchev that we will fight to defend Berlin.

Do you agree that this message has gotten home to the Kremlin?

MR. NITZE: I think it has...we haven't only increased the combat power and numbers of our ready divisions and the related mobility in aircraft and munitions, but we have also taken very important steps with respect to strengthening our nuclear power.

We did double the rate of production of the Polaris submarine. We did put in this big production program for the Minuteman. We have put in very extensive warning and alarm systems. We have perfected the control of these systems. We have put at least 50 percent of the B-52's on alert, a 15-minute alert, an airborne alert. The power of our nuclear forces is much greater than it was two years ago, or even a year ago, and I think this has also contributed to impressing Mr. Khrushchev with the dangers he would face if he impinged upon Western vital interests.

QUESTION: . . . Russia has just exploded its tenth nuclear shot in the atmosphere. From what we have been able to learn since it launched this nuclear series, do we detect any more breakthrough or gain in this field?

MR. NITZE: Not that I am aware of.

QUESTION: . . . Do you mean to imply any defense of Berlin would have to be a nuclear defense?

MR. NITZE: I did not mean to imply that, but I did mean to imply that all the factors of force and strength are inter-related and Khrushchev must see that.

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